

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. SIGHTING OF CARACAL IN THE CHAMBAL RAVINES OF BHIND DISTRICT, MADHYA PRADESH

While surveying the Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh, to capture crop-raiding Nilgai, for translocation to the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary (as part of a prey base supplementation for the proposed Asiatic Lion Reintroduction Project), I saw two Caracals (*Caracal caracal*) at an interval of about 15 days. The first sighting was on March 26, 2001 at 1630 hrs while I was standing on a hillock in the ravines. The Caracal was stalking and its tufted ears were conspicuous. The second sighting was on April 11, 2001 at 1930 hrs while I was coming back from the ravines and a Caracal came right in front of the vehicle. A few faculty members of the Wildlife Institute of India and the DFO, Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary, also saw it.

The study area included five villages, namely Bijpuri, Lavan, Chandupura, Karke ka pura and Gopalpura. The area surrounding these villages (2-4 sq. km) is privately owned, i.e. revenue land, and is being used for agriculture. The entire area has ravines.

The major plant species are *Prosopis cineraria*, *Capparis decidua*, *C. sepiaria*, *C. zeylanica*, *Acacia leucophloea*, *A. nilotica*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Salvadora oleoides*, *Balanites aegyptiaca*, *Zizyphus mauritiana* and *Z. nummularia* (Khudsar *et al.* 2001).

The area has diverse fauna, such as the Caracal, Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*), Small Indian Civet (*Viverricula indica*), Indian Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*), Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Hedgehog, Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*), Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), Hare and many species of birds.

After observing many bird kills, especially dove and partridge, and also scats with bird feathers, I asked the villagers of Bijpuri about the presence of the Caracal, locally called *Seyahgosh*, by showing a photograph. They confirmed its presence and informed that it mostly stayed in porcupine burrows. Prater (1971) also suggested that Caracals keep their kittens in porcupine burrows. They become more visible during the monsoon; perhaps they are not able to stay in the burrow.

Caracal is an endangered small cat, listed in CITES Appendix-I (Nowell and Jackson 1996), and in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

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2. OCCURRENCE OF INDIAN WOLF *CANIS LUPUS PALLIPES* IN THE PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MADHYA PRADESH

In December 1997, we were moving around the Pench Tiger Reserve at sunset, when a herd of cattle to the right of our vehicle panicked and ran towards us. To our surprise, we saw three wolves chasing the cattle. The wolves were startled when our vehicle halted with a screech. The first animal was a male, larger than the other two following it. They stood for a minute and moved away to the nearby *Cleistanthus* forest. We got down to follow the wolves, but they disappeared quickly into the forest. Though we had heard about the presence of wolves near the villages around the Pench Tiger Reserve, this was our first sighting.

After this incident, there were no sightings by the villagers until the afternoon of March 23, 1999 when

two wolves were reported seen close to Bodki village, 8 km from the Tiger Reserve. The wolves were stalking goats grazing close to a crop field, as we watched from our vehicle from a distance of c. 100 m. The wolves felt our presence and ran away towards the forest. We followed them for about 15 minutes along the road, as they moved ahead of our vehicle. We were fortunate to get the animals on video for a few minutes. Again, on April 29, 1999, the villagers of Karmajhiri reported that a pack of wolves had lifted five goats from their village in the morning. One goat had managed to escape and the half eaten carcasses of the other four were left near the village field.

Playfair (1891) reported the destruction of human

life by wolves in the Hoshangabad and Narsinghpur districts of Madhya Pradesh. Shahi (1982) reported the presence of wolves in six districts of Madhya Pradesh. After 13 years, Bharos (1996) reported their presence in Rewa, while Ranjitsinh (1998) reported the sighting of a female wolf in Raisen and Sidhi districts. In the same year, K. Yoganand of Wildlife Institute of India reported the presence of wolves and sighting of their seats and tracks on the fringes of Panna National Park, Panna district, Madhya Pradesh. This is the first report from Seoni district.

In Pench Tiger Reserve, Wild Dogs or Dholes (*Cuon alpinus*) are observed to occupy the forest, while wolves remain on the fringes, close to human settlements. The Pench Tiger Reserve supports major Carnivora, such as Tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Indian Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Wild Dog, Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Indian Fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*) and Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*).

The Indian Wolf seems to be widely distributed in Madhya Pradesh. The presence of wolves in Pench Tiger Reserve poses an intriguing question as the forest area is occupied by other canids, like the Wild Dog and

Indian Jackal, which are common. Yoganand and Johnsingh (2000) have also reported the co-existence of Dhole and Wolf in Panna, based on temporal and spatial segregation, wherein the Wolf occupies the forest fringes and the Wild Dog the forested area.

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3. DEATH OF A BLUE BULL *BOSELAPHUS TRAGOCAMELUS* DUE TO SNAKEBITE

Gura Bishnoi is a protected area covering 422 sq. km of area, c. 15 km southeast of Jodhpur (26° 78' N, 73° 08' E). There are 24 villages in this protected area, of which some are predominantly Bishnoi community areas.

On the morning of September 9, 2001, I visited Khajarli, the place where a legendary group of Bishnois died trying to protect the Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*). On the way, we stopped at Khajarli pond to observe Chinkara *Gazella bennetti*, Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* and a variety of birds. We were standing on the bank of the pond and watching wildlife when we heard an unusual animal sound in the nearby *Prosopis juliflora* plantation. We rushed in the direction of the sound, and saw a 1.5-1.8 m long Indian cobra (*Naja naja*) crossing the path. Further, there was a male Blue

Bull *Boselaphus tragocamelus* on a crippled hind leg, which prevented it from walking or running properly. After 10-12 minutes, the animal began to tremble and fell to the ground. People working in the fields nearby also came to the spot. One of the old Bishnoi farmers looked at the male Blue Bull and said that it was another case of snakebite by the black snake usually seen in the area. The Blue Bull's mouth was foaming with saliva and its left leg was swollen, when it finally died an hour later.

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